DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 420 440 PS 026 615

AUTHOR	De Viteri, Jorge Saenz
TITLE	From Teacher to Day Care Center Director!
PUB DATE	1998-05-00
NOTE	14p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrator Attitudes; *Administrator Characteristics; Administrator Qualifications; *Administrator Responsibility; *Administrator Role; *Administrators; Career Choice; *Career Development; Career Planning; *Day Care Centers; Early Childhood Education; Management Development; Professional Development

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the roles and responsibilities of a day care center director, based on the author's personal experience as an interim director during his junior year at college and a survey of other directors. The paper aims to provide insight into the reality of being a day care center director, particularly the acquisition of knowledge, skill, and training required to be effective. Various roles a director must perform are described, including that of the staff developer, accountant, personnel director, custodian, nutritionist, social worker, nurse, politician, activist, enforcer, mediator, and leader. The paper also discussed difficulties encountered while implementing changes in program operations. The results of the survey of day care center directors describes the career path and professional development of directors. Six ways to ease the transition from teacher to director are also discussed. Contains 10 references. (JPB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 420 440

From Teacher to Day Care Center Director!

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

- The staff developer
- The accountant
- The personnel director
- The custodian
- The nutritionist
- The social worker
- The nurse
- The politician
- The activist
- The enforcer
- The mediator
- The **leader**

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jorge Saenz De Viteri

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

By: Jorge Saenz De Viteri

PS 026615

Abstract

Research indicates that the vast majority of Day Care Center Directors have transitioned from the role of teacher to Director. One of the major issues that a new director encounters is the lack of knowledge, skill and training needed to become an effective Director. Many day care center directors have been given the opportunity to be the Director of a day care program because they have proven themselves to be great teachers, as well as having the necessary credentials required to meet the licensing guidelines. The role and responsibilities of the Director varies depending on the type of program; but, there are some responsibilities that do not change. This article will address the roles and responsibilities of a Day Care Center Director. The reader will get some insight about the reality of being a day care center director.

Most Early Childhood Center Directors are selected because of their exemplary performance as classroom teachers; not because they have demonstrated competence in administration (Bloom 1990). A unique situation that takes place in day care centers is the promotion of a teacher to Director. Prior to becoming a Day Care Center Director, I often wondered, "what do I need to do in order to influence as many young lives as possible?" While attending high school and up until my junior year in college I worked as a teacher's aide and group teacher, respectively. I always knew that teaching in a classroom would only bring me closer to my goal, however, I would need to find a vehicle that would allow me to accomplish my goal.

During my junior year in college, while working as a group teacher at a day care center located in the South Bronx, I was propositioned for the School-Age Director position at the same center. It was clear to me that I was a temporary replacement until a permanent candidate could be hired. Upon hiring this person, I would resume my position as a group teacher. Prior to accepting the position I contemplated the following:

1. A learning opportunity
2. A chance to actively participate in the overall children's program and not just be like others and complain about the administration.

3. Hands on learning experience in administering an after school program and the opportunity to see if I really would like administration.
4. A chance to shine.
5. The staff said that they would support and help me. It's going to be easy, they are my friends.

After thoroughly thinking of the advantages, I decided to accept the temporary position. At first, I found the staff to be very cooperative because of my friendships, but as I learned more about my new responsibilities, I realized that in order to ensure that I was doing my job, things needed to be changed. After implementing various changes for the benefit of the program, I realized that my friends in the day care program where disappearing. As I continued to make changes, the friendships that were established with my co-workers became non-existent.

These changes needed to come about and without any formal training in management, I continued to implement changes. There were a lot of things that being a classroom teacher and pursuing a degree in education had taught me about classroom management. I was familiar with classroom guidelines and procedures, however, I was unfamiliar with writing and enforcing guidelines and procedures for staff and parents. Changes that included establishing Personnel Policies and Procedures, Operations Manual and Parents Manual. These items did not exist so they had to be created. All these changes I had discussed with the Executive Director, who supported me in my endeavor, but provided me with minimum guidance.

New leadership certainly brings new ideas and energy into a program, but energy and ideas may not be enough (Riepe 1996). I was given the flexibility to attend workshops and training provided by the funding agency. It had not been three months since I took on the role of director, In short time period, I had implemented many new ideas. Ideas that were drawn from the staff's

strengths and interests in enhancing the program. Though they may not have been happy about the guidelines, the staff respected me for my professionalism and commitment towards improving the children's programs. During my early reign as the School-Age Director, two educational consultants from our funding agency reviewed our day care program. The results of the review were favorable. Both consultants discussed their findings with me and the field of day care management and programming. I explained to them my reasons for pursuing teaching and how I had a strong interest in having a positive impact on children's lives. This short experience had answered many questions about my interest in pursuing administration and supervision. The consultants recommended to our sponsoring board for me to be considered as the permanent candidate for the position I was filling on a temporary basis. The board agreed and I was granted the position.

This was the beginning in my transition from teacher to director. No previous training in management, no formal training on what was required to be a director. Minimal knowledge of the forms that were required to be kept, no training on monitoring a school budget, and no training in leadership.

From Teacher to Director! What are you getting into?

Kostelnik states that a major thinking principle that a director needs to keep in mind is that the success of the agency's goals depends on the work of others. Therefore, the director must be able to motivate, influence and lead his team to success (1982). Prior to becoming a director, the teacher who has transition to the role of director was accustomed to working with a small team of two to three people to accomplish the set goals for his or her classroom. With a new responsibility, the director who had transitioned from being a teacher is now required to work with a larger team

to accomplish the goals of the program. The team is no longer made up of just educators, but it includes administrative and support staff. The team has expanded to include bookkeeper, custodian and, cook. Each with a different responsibility, different agenda, and different personality. To ensure the success of the program, the director must work with each individual to ensure that the overall goal of the program is achieved. Trying to convince various individuals to work for this common goal is one of the tough part of the job, particularly, if the director was promoted from within.

But you use to do it! Coping with change.

John F. Kennedy once said, "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future." One of the biggest tasks that a director has with his or her staff is he or she has to help the staff to cope with change. As individuals, we all have different ways of thinking and we have different ideas about what should take place in our environment. One of the responsibilities of a director is that of a leader. As a leader, the director has to guide the staff and the parents to follow the vision and to assist them with the changes. Change is hard for most people, especially when they are not in control of the decisions responsible for changes.

I recall that during my second month after becoming a director I approached a staff member about a personnel issue. Her response was, "But you use to do it and we were allowed to do it before." I had to explain to the staff person that those personnel practices were not allowed anymore because those practices had an adverse effect on the children's program. This staff member resented my approach and stopped talking to me for about a month. Coping with change is hard and a two way street. Is hard for the staff as well as for the new director. New directors have to keep in mind that they have new role, new responsibility and a new vision. Not everything

that a director says is going to be liked by everyone and unfortunately, we can't please everyone.

The unknown journey-The Director's responsibility

When a teacher leaves the classroom to pursue the opportunity of becoming a director, they do it for several reasons. Within those reasons, there is a need to know what's ahead of them. A teacher who usually becomes a director is chosen for the outstanding performance in the classroom not necessarily because the teacher has had the opportunity to manage. Though a candidate may have an idea of their responsibility, the job has not been made cleared. Not until they have embarked on their new journey will the aspiring teacher learn about the many different roles of a day care director. Bloom points out that Many beginning directors are also concerned about status, their personal status in the organization, and their status in the field (1997). Therefore, new directors are likely to be eager, full of enthusiasm, and ready to take on the world. But, the transition from teacher to director has just begun. The staff developer, the accountant, the personnel director, the custodian, the nutritionist, the social worker, the nurse, the politician, the activist, the enforcer, the mediator and the leader. One wonders can I do this? Which role am I acting today? Little do people realize that a director may change role interchangeably.

The staff developer

The director needs to know that a major part of his responsibility is in this area, the director is responsible for assisting his staff in the development of themselves so that the goals and objectives of the program can be met. It is essential for staff to receive on-going training in these different areas. The director can accomplish this by regularly evaluating the staff and utilizing his or her findings to target the right training.

The accountant

This is also a very important role of the director. Actually, the director needs to do a little more than just balancing his or her checkbook. Whether is going after parents for their tuition or calling a funding agency for the program's monies, the director's efforts in this area can't be overlooked. Many people are depending on the director's ability to manage and supervise the fiscal operations of the program.

The personnel director

As mentioned earlier the success of a day care program depends on how the staff of the program works as a team and in order to ensure that the team is working towards the same goal, the right players have to be hired. Therefore, the recruitment and hiring of good staff is essential, the marketing of the program to them and on-going supervision and development of the team is essential for the enhanced the quality of the program.

The custodian, The nutritionist, The social worker, and The nurse

In order to ensure that parents and staff are attracted to your program, the director must be able to ensure a physical environment that reflects the center goals as well as assuring a hazard free facility. Since the children enrolled in your program spend a major part of their day in your care, the nutritional program that the center provides must be one that will help the children. Equally important is the directors' involvement in identifying resources for the families. Whether the family is dealing with a medical or mental crisis, the director needs to be very involved in this area.

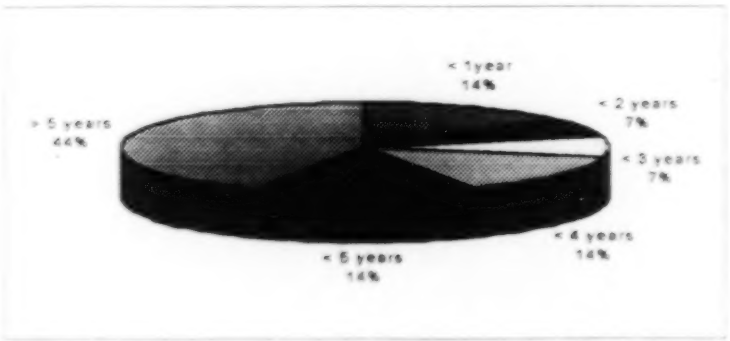
The politician, The activist, The enforcer, The mediator, and The leader

The bottom line is that the director is the backbone of the agency. The director must be willing to go that extra mile. The director is under constant scrutiny by the staff and the parents and the community. All of them are depending on the director's ability to address conflicts and the director's interactions are carefully monitored.

Directors Survey

Throughout the many interactions that I have had with directors of early childhood programs, I have been privy to many discussions about managing early childhood programs. Our discussions ranged from how to handle a situation with a difficult staff person to what are some creative ways of managing your budget. Throughout the many different books and magazines that I have read, I have not seen many studies on how a director of an early childhood program has developed. Therefore, I have been very interested in conducting a survey of directors to find out how they transition to the position and what has been their experience. In April 1998, I conducted a survey of Day Care Center Directors and my findings are as follows:

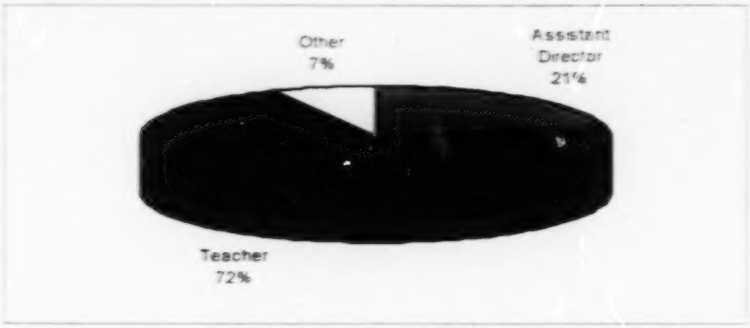
Figure 1: **YEARS AS DIRECTOR**



From the above chart (Fig 1), we clearly see that 72% of those surveyed have been

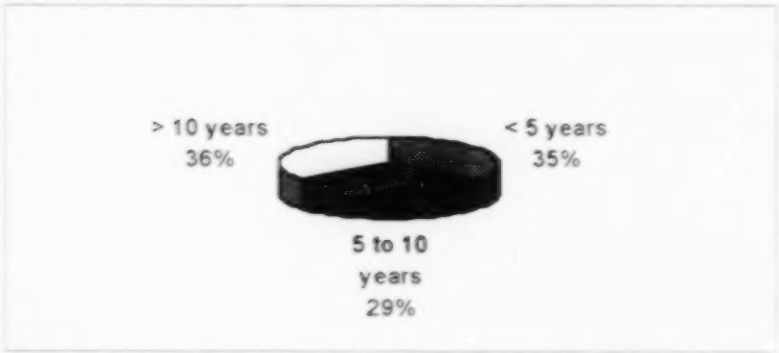
directors for more than three years, 28% have been directors under three years, and 21% have been directors for under two years.

Figure 2: **PREVIOUS PROFESSION BEFORE BEING A DIRECTOR**



As you will notice in Figure 2, 72% of those surveyed had transitioned from Teacher to Director and 21% had transitioned from Assistant Director to Director. This low number clearly indicates that a vast majority of directors have transitioned to their position with limited administrative experience, if any.

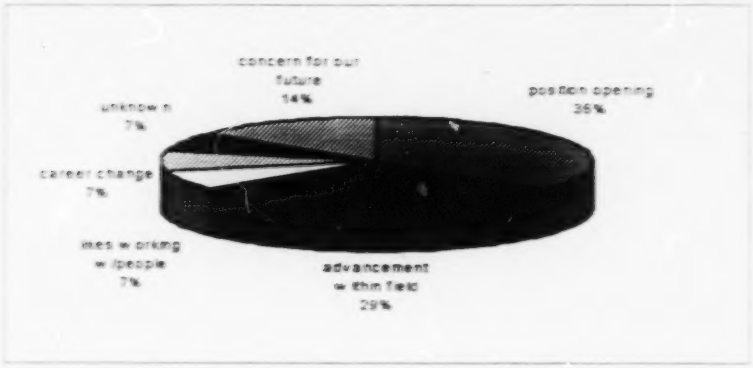
Figure 3: **YEARS IN PREVIOUS PROFESSION**



In Figure 3, we clearly see that the 65% of the directors surveyed had invested a minimum of five years in their previous profession. As figure 2 indicates, 72% had transitioned from being a

teacher to being a director. In analyzing these two figures, we can assume that those directors who were previously teachers had ample time to demonstrate their ability as teachers and as teachers they had received formal training.

Figure 4: **REASONS FOR BECOMING A DIRECTOR**



In the above figure (fig 4), we can conclude that 65% of those surveyed became a director because the position was vacant and it was an opportunity for advancement. Far fewer transitioned to become a director without a clear goal in mind.

Figure 5: **PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF DIRECTOR'S JOB RESPONSIBILITIES**

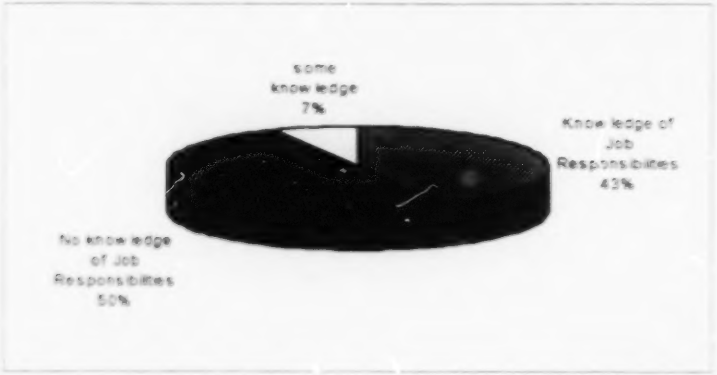
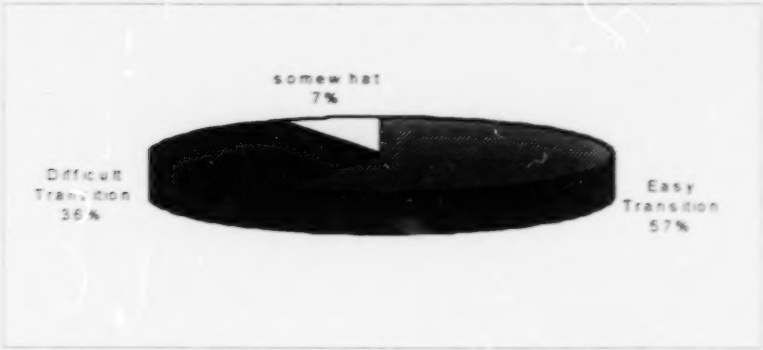


Figure 5 reveals that 50% of the directors surveyed had no knowledge of what their new job required. Therefore, when we look at figure 4 and figure 5 simultaneously, we have learned

that over half of the directors are working in our day care programs were very enthusiastic about their new as director role but did not know what was their expected role.

Figure 6: **TRANSITION DIFFICULTY LEVEL**



The above figure (fig. 6) shows that 57% of those surveyed found that their transition to director was an easy one and 36% found the transition difficult.

Conclusion

Managing a day care program is very exciting and rewarding. You are exposed to many diverse people and many learning experiences. There is a lot of glamour in being the leader, but there are also those moments that test your abilities. Knowing how to handle the various situations that confront you as a director, from a child being bitten by another child to talking to the parents about overdue fees, managing the day care program takes someone knowledgeable, dedicated and committed to the field. The transition from Teacher to Director can be eased by:

1) learning about the new role. i.e. familiarity with job descriptions (internships);

2) assuming some administrative responsibility as it becomes available(on the job training);

3) attending seminars;

4) reading information about child care laws;

5) reading materials and books on managing people;

6) Formal training (small business management).

As one can see from this article, a vast majority of the day care center directors have started out in their position by being given an opportunity. Teachers have taken the administrative role without any formal training in managing an early childhood program and in most cases without any previous experience in an administrative position. Upon reflecting on my experience and looking at the present I ask, how can an individual who has not had any experience in management and lead alone minimum experience as a teacher be pushed to managed a day care program? Who is really accountable for the program?

There are many lives at stake and we need to carefully look at the different support systems that are set up for new as well as experienced Day Care Center Directors. Just as we train our teachers to lead the classrooms, so must we train those who were are putting in charge of the decision making in our early childhood programs. If we take a look at our government agencies and our corporate organizations, we see that many of them have departments with leaders in each department to handle the many different aspects of the agency. Now let's take a look at our day care center director. He or she is managing all the different roles in many cases without additional support. We need to take a serious look at what we are doing to ensure that those individuals that have decision making power on our children's lives are properly trained. Since there is a lack of formal training to be a director, directors need to look at professionals organizations and network with other directors. Master directors need to assist and share their knowledge with the beginning director. Directors should form a network that can assist them with their many roles since formal training is not accessible and/or available.

References

Covey, S.R. (1989). The seven habits of highly effective people. New York, NY: Fireside.

Harvey, E., & Ventura, S. (1997). Walk awhile in my shoes. Dallas, TX: Performance Publishing Company.

Jorde-Bloom, P. (1997). Navigating the rapids: Directors reflect on their careers and professional development. Young Children 52 (7). 32-38.

Jorde-Bloom, P., & Sheerer, M., & Britz, J. (1991). Blueprint for action: achieving center-based change through staff development. Mt. Rainier, MD: Gryphon House.

Jorde-Bloom, P. (1988). A great place to work. Washington, DC. NAEYC.

Kagan, S.L. & Bowman, B. T. (1997) Leadership in early care and education. Washington, DC. NAEYC.

Kostelnik, M. (1982). Making the transition from teacher to director. Washington, DC: Child Care Information Exchange.

Neugerbauer, R. (1988). Leadership essentials: uncoventional advice to directors from some unconvetional leaders. Washington, DC: Child Care Information Exchange. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ382626)

Neugerbauer, R. (1997). Whiter non profit child care? is the non profit structure an anachronism? Washington, DC: Child Care Information Exchange. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ539873)

Riepe, L. (1996). When you are the new director-finding your way with staff. Washington, DC: Child Care Information Exchange. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ534578)